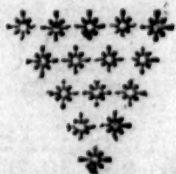


S H O R T
EXPOSTULATIONS
AND *K S. G.*
T H O U G H T S
O N
S U I C I D E.



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EXPOSITIONS

THROUGH

OF

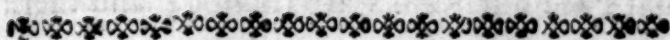
STUDIES



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S H O R T

Expostulations, &c.

AS there is nothing that cometh from the
 Press, that is fought after with that Greedi-
 ness, as the daily and weekly News-Papers,
 every extravagant Action of every man that
 is there taken Notice of, doth presently pass
 under the Sight of the Multitude. From
 hence Foreigners form their Opinion of this
 Nation. There is a Bill of common Casual-
 ties and Diseases, to inform how, and with
 what

what Pace our Ranks are thinn'd; and there is a Cry of *Murder* that goeth along our Streets, not that which proceedeth from outward Violence only, and open Attack, but is publish'd from the Retirement of the self-destroyer. It is every Day more and more observ'd, how prevailing a Sin, the Sin of Suicide is amongst us, many lay this to the Charge of desultory and inconstant Tempers, and to the Fickleness of Climate; and think that the gloomy Covering of every dark Day doth unavoidably force forward to this deplorable and desperate Act. And a late Author of Eminence, who, ^{through} ~~through~~ all his Letters personates a Papist, in characterizing the English, and speaking of the Frequency of

this

this Crime, hath found out one new Cause thereof, and that is, the Want of *Auricular Confession*. And what is said in half-earnest, is often accepted wholly so.

But yet, it is not in Reality, the opening of the Ear of man, nor the disburthening of our Minds before Mortals, nor the too pungent Sense of Evils that doth promote this Iniquity, (tho' this is often pleaded) but it is the closing of the Door of our Lips before God, and a too slow and languid Sense of Religion. It is my Design, therefore, in the few following Pages to shew this forth; and tho' the distemper'd do, most generally, lye at the longest Remove from all salutary Admoni-

tions

tions and Council, yet if it shou'd so happen by any Accident, that I can, but in one single Instance, blunt the Dagger's Point, or stop the fatal Dose, I shall hope to sympathize with the man, thus *Possessing his Soul in Patience*, and to partake of those Comforts which are wish'd to him. In Order then, to persuade to *introduce* and persuade to such Tenets as are true, let us first bring those that are false, but are much rely'd on, to a Tryal. Let us take a short View of those disorderly Principles which lead to Facts of that Nature, and consider how inconsistent they are with the rectify'd Reason even of a moral good Man, but much more with the Religion of a Sincere Christian.

Now,

Now, the main Principle upon which some build their Vindication of *Suicide* is, that every Man is *Sui juris*; that is, to use the famous *Mr. Blount's* Words, *the Judge, or rather Disposer of himself.* It is one, as he goes on, *of the Regalia of Free-will, and will always be thought good and eligible, when any comes into the Circumstances of exerting it.* This Gentleman hath long ago taken his Place in the uppermost Class of *Deistical Writers,* and hath properly been animadverted upon by the judicious Pen of that Excellent Christian, the late learned *Doctor Leland.*

As to this particular Principle of his, of *Man's being the sole Disposer of himself,* it will,

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if examin'd, be found very fallacious both in Reason and Religion. For, how came man by this *absolute Power over himself*? Had it he by Nature? Or, has God, by any positive Concession invested him with it? That he hath it not from Nature is demonstrably plain, from the unquestionable inhering of another Principle which this is absolutely destructive of, and contrary to; namely, the great Principle of self-preservation. It is hardly to be suppos'd, that *in Nature* there shou'd be two Principles so diametrically opposite to one another as self-preservation and self-destruction. At this Rate, Man wou'd be an oddly compos'd Creature, to have, *by Nature*, a strong Propension to preserve him-

self

self in Being, and, at the same Time, no less a strong one to destroy himself. But, this is contrary to all that Experience we feel in our selves, and so needs no further to be insisted upon.

But then, tho' Man, as an *Animal Being*, may have a strong Principle of Self-preservation in him, common with all other living Creatures; yet, as he is a *Rational Being*, and consequently a free Agent, may he not sometimes see Occasion to supersede that *natural* Principle? By no means; because he did not give himself Being, and what a Man did not give, he cannot justly take away without the Leave of him that gave it; and also, because there is no End sufficiently worthy to justify such an Action.

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The most feigned Cause is, that of heavy and sore Affliction. But now, let us consider a Man in adverse Circumstances, and he must either have done some Evil, whereby to bring himself into them, or he hath not. If he hath, then it is but that just Reward of his Deserts, and he ought to bear his Punishment with all Submission and Chearfulness. If he hath not, then the Cause will bear out it self; and to a well disposed Mind, Innocence is the greatest Support, and administers the only solid Comfort; Pressures *without*, may render Life, for the present, uneasy, but, a quiet Conscience *within*, will soon Compose all those Disorders. Life will still be valuable, so long as a well temper'd Mind

can

can see it possible that, for some End or other, it may be serviceable; and that is, as long as the Providence of God Superintends the World. That Mind therefore is rather to be look'd upon as weak, which cannot sustain the Infirmities of it's own Body, or flight the Opinions of the Vulgar. For, if there be any Thing of Bravery in a Man's venturing to take away his own Life, there must be much more in preserving it in a State of Misery; because the one is, at most, but one Act, since killing a Man's self, can be done but once, but the other are continued, and repeated Acts of Courage.

Hitherto therefore it appears that *Suicide* cannot be brave, because it is repugnant to

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the Law of Nature, and because it is unlawful; and it is unlawful, because it is repugnant to the Will and Law of God. In the divine Law there is an absolute Prohibition of Murder. Now, why is not Self-murder, as much Murder, as the Murdering of another Person? Blood is shed, and a Creature of God, created after his own Image, is destroy'd no less in the one, than the other; and therefore both equally unlawful. It may perhaps be said, that in the one Case there is Injustice done to our Neighbour, but that in the other there is none; and who can complain of wrong done, if we our selves do not?

But, setting aside the Title which our Country, our Friends, and Relations may
have

have in us, to all which the violent taking away our Lives before our Time, is a manifest Injury and Grievance, is there no such Thing as Justice due to a Man's self? Does not Nature it self cry out of Injury offer'd, when she is oppress'd? Does she ever fail to challenge us of faulty Conduct, and to complain of hard Usage, when either thro' Intemperance we contract Fevers, or thro' Rashness and Violence, render any of our Limbs useles? Are we not ready, on such Occasions, to charge our selves with ill-doing, and to accuse our selves of Injustice to that Body, which we ought to cherish and preserve? And wou'd not nature, think we, do the same, and that in a much higher Degree, and with

more

more clamorous Accents, in the absolute Destruction of her-self, if she were able? Indeed, when the Functions of Life cease, a Man is past complaining, and which is the Misery of it, past repenting. But, who can tell, or who describe the Horrors of the yet struggling Soul, upon it's violent Separation and untimely Divorce, from it's old and long Acquaintance, the beloved Body? what mournful Cries wou'd it utter, had it then Organs proper for Expostulations, and with what enraged Accents upraid it's own unnatural Boldy.

But, granting there were no Injustice in such an Act against a Man's own self, is there still none against God, the *Life of Life*, and

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the sole Cause of our Being? Hath he no title to us; no Interest in us? Hath he sent us into this World, to make us Judges when we have stay'd long enough in it, and done all that Service for which he sent us? To dispose of our selves, if we had made our selves, had been no such great Matter; but to do it when God hath made us, and plac'd us here for some good End of his Providence and Conduct over this World, is to retrench upon his Prerogative. Hence, Tully, in his Book *de Senectute*, tells us, *ut illud breve vitæ reliquum, nec avide appetendum senibus, nec sine causa deserendum*; that, as even old Men shou'd not be very desirous of continuing on that little Remainder of this Life, so shou'd they not quit it but up-

on a very weighty Consideration. And then he brings in the Opinion of *Pythagoras* to confirm what he says. *Vetat Pythagoras injussu Imperatoris, id est, Dei, de præsidio et statione vitæ decedere;* that *Man* being plac'd here by God, something like a Centinel upon the Watch, was not to desert his Post when he pleas'd, but wait till he was call'd off by Order of his Commander in chief; that is, of God.

And it is one very great Aggravation of this Sin, that it is not perfected till a Man is out of all Capacity of begging Pardon for it. Know we must that the Day of Grace is confined to this Life only. This is the only Time wherein we are to work out our Salvation; for the Night cometh wherein no Man

can

can work. It is a certain Truth that the Gospel Covenant is made only for this Life; and tho' the Rewards it proposes, and the Punishments it threatens depend on Futurity, yet the Conditions upon which the one are to be obtained, and the other avoided, are to be fulfill'd here, or no where. For, *there is no Work, nor Device, nor Knowledge, nor Wisdom in the Grave, whither thou goest.*

Suicide, therefore, is such a Sin as no Man can repent of in this World; upon which account, unless God forgiveth it without Repentance, it can never be forgiven. The Gospel Grace, which only saveth Penitents, cannot save such Men. He then is a bold Man in this Respect; and ventures very far
upon

upon unpromised and uncovenanted Mercy, who will commit such a Sin, which the Grace of the Gospel cannot pardon; moreover, a Sin which necessarily includes many others in it. The only Ends, so far as we can conceive, for which Men enter into such desperate Thoughts and Resolutions, of taking away their own Lives, are either to rid themselves of some present pressing Inconvenience, or to prevent such as they are apprehensive are likely to fall upon them. And, if we look narrowly into the Matter, we shall find that scarce any Act of this horrid Nature was ever deliberately committed, but had it's Original from Pride; People are apt to entertain great Thoughts of themselves, and whenever they

meet

meet with some grand Disappointment, of which the World is full, they think they are hardly dealt with, and so must dispatch themselves.

But, what will such a Criminal have to answer, when he shall be impleaded before the Bar of God's Justice, and be asked the Question why he made such Haste into another World? why he deserted his Post and Station of Life so much before his Time; before he was regularly summon'd off? Will it then be any good Plea to urge, that God, in his Providence, did not deal well with him? That he deserved better at his Hand? That it was no longer fit to see himself the Object of Public Scorn, or of Reproach and Derision? That

it

it was beneath him any longer to submit to
 the Insolences of Men, or the Incidences of
 Providence ; to struggle with the Burden of
 Poverty, or the Scandal of Infamy ? Will this
 hold, when we have to give in our Accounts
 both of our living and dying ? Woe, there-
 fore, to *fearful Hearts and faint Hands*, and
what will ye do when the Lord shall visit you ?
Woe unto him that is faint-hearted, for he be-
lieveth not ; therefore shall he not be defended for
he believeth not. And can any thing be a
 stronger Mark of Infidelity ? A Man who go-
 eth about to Murder himself, because he is al-
 ready miserable, or because he apprehends
 that he shall be so, must of course conclude
 that it is not in the Power of any to render his

Circumstances

Circumstances better, or to Punish him here-
 after for the Evil he committeth here. He
 must think that his present Uneasiness is much
 greater than any he can meet with in another
 State. But, is it so? Are the Miseries of
 this Life such, as it is not in the Power of
 Omnipotence to redress; and if he pleases, to
 recompence? There is certainly no limiting
 the Almighty's Power, either in inflicting
 Evil or delivering from it, and there is no
 Condition which he cannot make better or
 worse when ever he pleases.

The Ends of Providence, in all it's Actings,
 are not always conspicuous and manifest to
 us; and it is not proper they shou'd be so.

But we may be assured that God doth not Act

at

at all Adventures as we Mortals do, and if he wou'd have us resign up our Breath, he hath Ways in Abundance to take us out of the World, without the Instrumency and Assistance of our own Hands. Every common Calamity bringeth a Lesson with it; and whatever Uncertainty there is in assigning Causes for Events, and especially such as are of an extraordinary Nature, thus much may be depended upon, that whenever God bringeth Evil upon any, it is an Argument he wou'd have them live patiently under it, till such Time as he seeth proper to take it away from them, or them from it. To attempt to do either of a Man's self, is to undervalue the Wisdom of God as tho' he had

not

not done what was fit and convenient to do
in such Circumstances.

If a Man believeth God to be true, there
are so many Invitations in his Word for Sin-
ners to repent and turn to him, so many Pro-
mises of Pardon and Acceptance of Penitents;
so many Examples of God's particular Provi-
dence over Persons in Affliction; so many
Rewards proposed to a stedfast Faith and
Perseverance; and so many dreadful Threat-
nings of Punishment to Obstinacy and Diso-
bedience; that no Man can engage in the
horrid Work of doing Violence to himself, till
he hath bid *farewell* to the Belief of all these.
If he doth believe these, he hath no Reason
to despair even in the worst Condition; and

I regard this as an establish'd Truth, that he
will never make more Haste than he ought
out of *this* World, who either hopes for the
Happiness, or fears the Misery of *another*.

G. S.

F I N I S.



